GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

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Note to Teachers—The next issue of the Geographic News Bulletin will be upon the reopening of schools in October. The Bulletin is not issued during the summer vacation months.

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5. Tuneful Sands of the Sahara.

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IN MEXICO THE FAMILY WASH SOMETIMES INCLUDES THE CHILDREN. (See Bulletin No. 3.)

HOW TO OBTAIN THE BULLETIN

The Geographic News Bulletin is published weekly throughout the school year (thirty issues) and will be mailed to teachers for one year upon receipt of 25 cents (in stamps or money order). Entered as second-class matter, January 27, 1922, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized February 9, 1922.

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Amalfi: Between Sky and Sea

AMALFI, the picturesque little Italian town in and near which there recently have been disastrous land-slips, has had slides before. For ages the sea has been remorseless in eating under the red rock cliffs on which the town and its neighboring villages perch, but more important has been Amalfi's figurative slip from its position as the world's first naval power to comparative obscurity and unimportance.

The Amalfi district just south of Naples is one of the most beautiful, scenically, of Italy's beauty spots. A collection of views showing quaint Old World villages clinging to cliff-sides could hardly escape including Amalfi. It seems the archetype of them all. The rough, red cliffs spring steeply from the sea along this coast, and it must have been a daring builder who first conceived the idea of planting his structures there. But there they have clung for more than a thousand years, and when the sea, at times, has swallowed some of the buildings, the people of the region have built others farther up the precipitous slopes.

"A City Singularly Piled Upon Itself"

Hans Christian Andersen, who between fairy tales wrote charmingly of Italy's lovely scenery, described Amalfi in a phrase when he called it "a city singularly piled upon itself." Its little streets run not only among, but through the houses, and some of its dark, tortuous passages must be lighted in midday. Its main street with its curious archways gives a touch of the Orient. Behind the town in a deep ravine is the picturesque "glen of the mills," where a roiling stream leaps toward the sea in cascade after cascade, driving the machinery of dozens of clanking paper mills. Paper-making is one of the main industries of Amalfi, and in addition there are the inevitable macaroni factories, and soap-making plants.

It is difficult to realize that little Amalfi, precariously stuck upon its cliffs, with a population of only about 5,000, was once a wealthy independent city-state whose might was recognized throughout the Near East.

In the early Middle Ages, before Venice and Genoa and Pisa rose to power, Amalfi was the great mercantile and naval power of the Mediterranean. Its traders started the Order of St. John, later the Knights of Malta. Its fleet was the scourge of the Saracens in the trying days when their boats preyed on Mediterranean commerce. Under the city's doges a maritime court was maintained whose code was the acknowledged maritime law of Europe for centuries. And as a further contribution to the nautical world an Amalfian citizen is believed to have invented the mariners' compass, whose north-seeking needle, though known to the Chinese, was not previously used for navigation.

Beauty Clings to the Rocky Sea Cliffs

Ribbons of highway skirt the cliffs in the Amalfi district, rising over ridges, and falling into hollows, turning sharp corners and dodging into and out of little tunnels. Always, below, lies the blue Mediterranean and tied together by the

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AMALFI: VIEW FROM THE CONVENT OF THE CAPUCHINS, REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN DAMAGED

Few cities of Italy have more frequently taxed the descriptive vocabularies of artists and travelers than Amalfi. (See Bulletin No. 1.)

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The Growth of State Parks

CITY PARKS and national parks are well enough known; now enters the state park, which, in popularity, bids fair to rival its older park sisters.

The forthcoming National Conference on State Parks, at Gettysburg, Pa., will emphasize the rapidly multiplying uses of these state reservations.

Many visitors are attending the Conference, both because of the varied program touching upon so many phases of outdoor life, and also because the meeting is at one of the most famous battlefields of modern times, notable for its memorials to the men of both the North and the South who fell there, and also for the scenic beauty of the panorama of knolls and hillsides that forms the Gettysburg state reservation.

Arrangements for the meetings were made by John Barton Payne, chairman of the Conference on State Parks, whose headquarters are at the National Red Cross Building, in Washington, D. C.

"A Park Every 100 Miles"

The rapid growth of these parks makes the slogan "a park every hundred miles" seem not so impossible as it sounds. Twenty-six states now have their own park systems—and these parks range from the vast Adirondack Park, in New York State, with more than three million acres, to the one-acre sand bar in the Connecticut River, which is Dart Island State Park, of Connecticut.

Michigan leads all the states in the number of its state-owned parks, with 30 such reservations. Connecticut, though one of the smallest states, is second, with 25 parks.

Then come New York, with 22 parks; Minnesota, with 17; Pennsylvania, with 14; while Iowa, with its 13 reservations, to which it invites tourists to repair "from prairie land to fairyland," is the leader of the state park movement in the Middle West.

Wisconsin Has Islands For Rent

Havens for the tourists are afforded in increasing numbers of the state parks; some of them offer camping places for the entire vacation period. In Wisconsin the city dweller can rent an island for a nominal sum, and play Swiss Family Robinson.

Many of the best known state parks embody world-renowned scenic features —notably Niagara Falls, New York. They furnish a panorama of the varied physical features our country possesses—from the curiously modeled gorges of Mashamoquet Brook State Park, of Connecticut, to the tropical setting of the Royal Palm State Park, of Florida, less than 50 miles southwest of Miami.

Historic and literary shrines are preserved, as in Lincoln's Home, in the Old Salem State Park, of Illinois, and in James Whitcomb Riley's "old swimmin' hole" on an Indiana reservation. Indiana also preserves in some of her parks her magnificent waterfalls—which fact may be an item of news to many travelers whose knowledge of her geography is confined to car window observations on transcontinental trips.

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balustraded highway are charming little villages. It was among these villages and towns clustered about Amalfi—Atrani, Mulini, Furore, Praiano—that greatest damage was suffered in the recent landslide.

Amalfi's decline from its high medieval state is partly traceable to the inroads the sea has made upon it. The sea began to undermine the lower parts of the town in the twelfth century, and about the same time came subjection from the Norman rulers of Sicily and Naples. In 1343 a terrible inundation destroyed most of the town and its harbor. From that date the decline was rapid, and before long the city of 50,000 inhabitants had shrunk to one-tenth its former size.

Picturesqueness and beauty have clung to Amalfi as tenaciously as Amalfi has clung to its cliffs. Nothing can shake these assets. Boat loads of tourists sail from Naples between the Sorrentine peninsula and Capri to enter what is left of Amalfi's harbor and admire its beauties from the sea; while other sightseers drive down along the shelving highways to enjoy the obverse of the picture. High over the climbing town, hotels are perched in hollows of the cliffs to command incomparable views. Guests, forewarned, barely escaped from some of these aerie hostelries.

Bulletin No. 1, May 19, 1924.

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DATE GROWING IS A LEADING OASIS INDUSTRY

An expert workman, known as the "getaa," armed with a "mengel," an iron knife having a heavy serrated blade, with which he cuts off the bunch of ripe dates. (See Bulletin No. 5.)

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To Uncover Building Which Probably Is Oldest in America

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY has announced the sending of an expedition to Mexico to uncover what is probably the oldest structure yet found on the American continent—a structure that may have been built some 8,000 years ago.

The ruins of Cuicuilco, south of Mexico City, constitute the Pompeii of the Western World.

Probably a thousand years before Pharoah drove his slaves to build the Great Pyramid, and more than twice as long ago as King Tutankhamen was buried beside the Nile, some ancient monarch of the Valley of Mexico forced his subjects to erect a mighty monument to gods long forgotten.

7,000-Year Old Skeleton Uncovered

Already San Cuicuilco has disclosed an artificial mound 412 feet in diameter and 52 feet high. These observations were made by Professor Byron Cummings, leader of The Geographic Expedition, in preliminary work at the site of the amazing ruins.

Further explorations may revolutionize our history of ancient America.

Skeleton remains of the Americans of perhaps 7,000 years ago, specimens of their emblems and idols, and pieces of their earthenware, found at Cuicuilco by Dr. Cummings, upset current theories about the origin of human life on our continent.

Believes Early Americans Were Distinctive

"The steps of human development from the simplest beginnings are as easily traceable in the Valley of Mexico as in Mesopotamia or the Valley of the Nile," Dr. Cummings says. "Point out as we may similarities to Mongolian types, or to western Asiatic and Egyptian designs and conceptions, we must acknowledge after all that the early inhabitants of America were distinctly American. Their dissimilarities to Asiatics, both east and west, to Africans, and to Europeans are far more pronounced than their similarities. They form a large group of the human family, separated from the parent stock in some remote age, who, as they gradually multiplied and possessed themselves of this part of the globe, sought to surmount its obstacles and to become masters of their surroundings.

"The early American did not differ greatly from the early Asiatic, the early Egyptian, or even the primitive European. He offered such incense to his own gods as he thought best won their favor and cooperation, and tended his own garden and managed his own household in his own peculiar fashion; but he evolved many ideas, characteristics, and customs akin to those of his cousins across the seas.

"America thus has a prehistory extending far back into the early centuries of human development. The steps of her progress and the successes achieved are as interesting and instructive as any attained by the renowned human groups of the Old World."

Two Lava Blankets Seal Remains of Primitive People

The lofty mound at Cuicuilco was sealed and preserved by lava from the Crater Xitli. The Aztecs of Mexico were preceded by the Toltecs, and the

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Extending Principles of Democracy to Parks

Starved Rock Park, in Illinois, perpetuates far older history than that to be found in textbooks—its sandstone formations date back to a period when America's inland plain was the floor of a sea.

Tropical jungle, the giant redwood trees of California, the sand dunes of Indiana, waterfalls, lovers' lanes, the jewelled lakes of Minnesota, the mountain outlooks of Connecticut—these are a few of the wonder spots which states have set aside for the use of all their people, and as a heritage for their children.

If you take Noah Webster's word for it, a park used to be "an enclosed piece of ground stocked with beasts of the chase, held by prescription or the king's grant." The idea of the State Parks Conference seems to be that today a park is "an unenclosed piece of ground stocked with beasts, trees, flowers, and scenic features, not to be destroyed, but held by prescription of the people for their own use."

Lincoln's Birthplace and Composer's Home May Be Set Aside

The value of the parks as game refuges, for camping and nature study, extension of trails for hiking, establishment of more museums for preserving specimens, and their wider use in scientific study will be considered at the conference.

Each year finds new state recruits in the movement for state park systems. In Kentucky the legislature has just passed a measure creating a state park commission. Three proposed sites for parks in the Blue Grass State are the place near Bardstown, where Stephen Foster wrote "My Old Kentucky Home," the place of Lincoln's birth, near Hodgenville, and Mammoth Cave.

Bulletin No. 2, May 19, 1924.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the Geographic News Bulletin were made for the year ending with this issue. It will be a great help in handling the large mailing list of the Bulletins if you order your next season's supply now and thus avoid missing any issues at the opening of the school sessions in the fall. The attached form may be used:

School Service Department
National Geographic Society
Washington, D. C.

Kindly send ..... copies of the Geographic News Bulletin for the school year beginning with the issue of ....., for classroom use, to

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Sulphur, Sicily and Civilization

THE UNITED STATES is the world's greatest consumer of sulphur. Certain scientists maintain that, in the twentieth century, a nation's consumption of sulphur is a true measure of progress in civilization since sulphur figures in practically every important manufacturing process.

Not only does the United States consume more sulphur than any other nation; since the war it has become the outstanding producer of sulphur. Back of this rise to preeminence is a world drama of machinery and muscle, in which the United States and Sicily played the leading roles.

The United States, armed with steam pipes, won. Sicily, actually starving, was about to give up when the American sulphur producers made an agreement to let Sicily serve the entire Italian market and ship a certain amount to other countries. It was an echo of the industrial revolution of the 18th century when machines began to do men's work.

Sicilian Methods of Recovery Crude

Sicily in certain localities still mines sulphur as it was mined hundreds of years ago; even as the Aztecs mined gold and silver by laboriously carrying up ore in baskets. In some places the old smelting process is in use. This consists of erecting a pile of sulphur, igniting it, and letting the sulphur's own heat melt the ore. Only 60 per cent of the mineral is recovered by this crude process and the product is impure. Better mines have cones in which the sulphur is melted and in some cases it is taken off in a volatile form, cooled to a liquid, and then to a solid block called "zolfogreggio."

Driven by competition, Sicilians use children in the mines. Child labor presented itself in its most horrible aspects as children of seven and eight years tugged at baskets of ore in ill-made mines. Many boys were permanently deformed by the burdens. Gases engendered by sulphur compounds add hazards to shaft mining.

Sulphur is found in paying quantities in many parts of the United States, but the richest deposits were discovered in Louisiana and Texas, near the coast. Here thousands of dollars and many lives were lost in wresting sulphur from nature. Quicksand, the great enemy of miners, was always on the job until Frasch, a mining engineer, had an idea which revolutionized the sulphur industry.

Erect Oil Derricks Over Sulphur Domes

Over a known sulphur "dome" 4,000 feet in diameter, a derrick, looking for all the world like an oil derrick, was erected and a shaft forced down 1,000 feet to the sulphur. Three pipes were put down the shaft and, in one, superheated water under pressure was sent to do man's work. Sulphur melts at 240 degrees Fahrenheit, so it dissolved in the water. Hot air under compression was forced down a second pipe and soon hot water with liquefied sulphur came spouting up the third pipe. The stream from a "sulphur well" is directed into bins where the water is taken off, usually leaving the mineral more than 99 per cent pure. Steam shovels load it direct to freight cars. Economies of this process excluded

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Toltecs were preceded by a primitive people whose traces were embalmed in this lava.

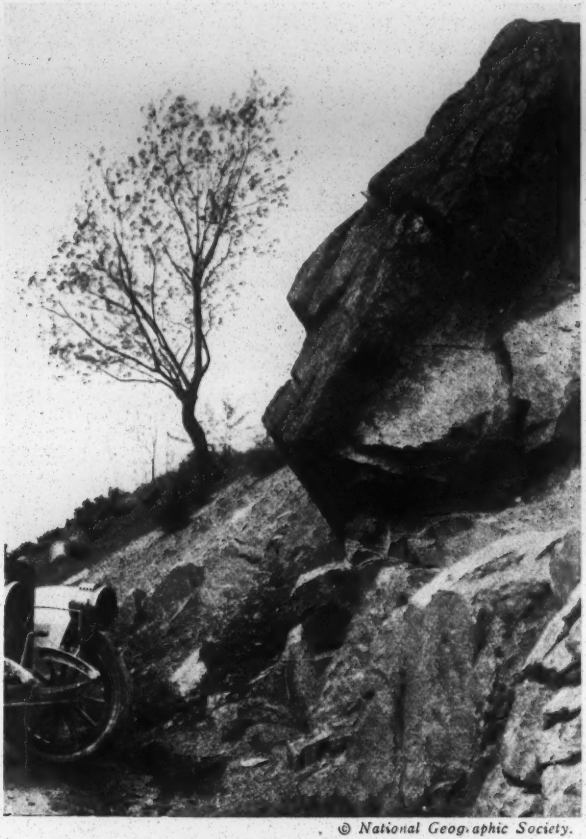
In addition to the lava there is a non-volcanic deposit and it is beneath this blanket which the ages laid down that remains may be found of a civilization which thrived even before the primitive predecessors of the Toltecs invaded the historic valley.

Natives Thought Scientists Were Digging for Gold

The lava-covered plain known as the Pedregal, or Stony Place, is 15 miles in length and about 3 miles wide. It has long been a refuge for revolutionists and criminals. When Dr. Cummings and Dr. Manuel Gamio, Director of Anthropology in the Bureau of Agriculture and Public Works in Mexico, were doing preliminary work they found that the natives were surreptitiously digging too, in the belief that hidden treasure was concealed there.

The expedition leader will begin work early in June, with the aid of three assistants, and peon laborers provided by the Mexican Government. Nelson H. Darton, of the U. S. Geological Survey, will join the party later to make a special study of the lava flow and thus determine the precise age of the ruins.

Bulletin No. 3, May 19, 1924.



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WASHINGTON PROFILE ROCK AT SAYRE PARK: SOUTH BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

The Keystone State's magnificent highways and eye-filling scenery in such regions as the Delaware Water Gap have an irresistible lure for the pleasure-seeking autoist. (See Bulletin No. 2.)

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the competition of cheapest Sicilian labor. The United States now produces 1,800,000 tons annually, almost nine times as much as Sicily mines.

If the world had known that a nation could be judged by its sulphur, England might have realized at once the American colonies' importance. The first ore shipment ever made from the United States was sulphur. When Captain John Smith established the Jamestown settlement in 1607, the colonists spent more time hunting gold than planting crops. Ships starting back for England filled their holds with what we now call "fool's gold." The "precious" yellow substance the colonists unearthed was sulphur; they sent pyrites back to England.

Used in Books, Alum, Ink, Glass and Golf Balls

Sulphur, or its many compounds, are as vital to hundreds of conveniences a man enjoys as the rat was to the House that Jack Built. It is essential to the windows of his house, the color of its paint, the paint itself, the color of his wall paper and the paper. It fertilizes the ground in which his food is raised, makes the onion distinctively an onion, gives a polish to his shoes, and tans the leather of them. It is in the hard rubber of his telephone and his radio set, in the tires of his automobile, in the fuel that runs it, the oil that lubricates it, and makes possible the electricity for ignition. For nearly everything made of rubber we owe to sulphur.

Sulphur is a factor in the making of every piece of clothing a man wears, and every book or newspaper he reads. It is essential to photography, prevention of inroads by insects, galvanizing of steel, explosives, medicine, fire extinguishers, soap, ice making, preserving food, purifying water, cleaning fluids, motion pictures, plaster of Paris, green fireworks, golf balls, starch, matches, alum, ammonia, and ink. Finally, one per cent of the human body is sulphur.

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UNCOVERING THE BASE OF THE MOUND WHICH PROMISES TO BE THE POMPEII OF THE NEW WORLD.

The study of the ruins at Cuicuilco may revolutionize our conception of early American history. "The steps of human development are as easily traceable in the Valley of Mexico as in Mesopotamia or along the Nile." (See Bulletin No. 3.)

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Tuneful Sands of the Sahara

THE LIBYAN DESERT, the most inhospitable portion of the sequestered Sahara, is the home of the "song of the sands."

This is a distinctly musical but very faint sound given out by the sands of the deserts, which sometimes seems to be composed of two distinct parts. A desert traveler described the one part as resembling the sighing of the wind in telegraph wires, and the other as a deep, throbbing sound that strongly resembled the after-reverberation of the chimes of a large clock. It took place after a steady down-pour on an almost cold day followed by frequent vivid summer lightning, and was explained by him as probably being caused by the sand's pouring over a low scarp or declivity somewhere in his vicinity.

Barren Desert Abundant With Life

It is hard to realize that an utterly barren desert could be haunted by queer sounds and peopled with abundant animal life. When one treads upon the hard crust on the top of the sand it breaks with a hollow, almost bell-like sound, and it is said that there is a place on the top of a plateau near Kasr Dakhl which gives out a musical note when struck.

The desert supports, mysteriously, numbers of birds, snakes, lizards, and some very unusual varieties of moths and insects. Foxes and jackals make their ways out into the desert to a distance of several days' travel from the water holes. Their presence might be explained as they live on the snakes and mice, but it is almost impossible to explain how the mice live, as there is practically no vegetation. The simplest thing to do under the circumstances is to fall back upon the old Bedouin explanation that they "live upon the stones."

Biggest Blank Patch in All Africa

The Libyan Desert may easily be found on a map of Africa by looking for the largest blank space on the continent. It is bordered on the north by a populated coastal strip running down to the Mediterranean, on the east by a populated area in the valley of the Nile, on the south by Darfur, and on the west by Tibesti and the great Sahara. It overlaps into Egypt, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and Italian Libya.

The Kufra Oasis, 400 miles south of the nearest point on the Mediterranean coast, is an important stopping place on the caravan routes from Darfur and the Lake Chad region. Before the World War camels squealed under the loads of feathers, ivory and hides which they brought into the settlement for barter and shipment to the coast.

Few attempts have ever been made to chart the rolling sand dunes or locate definitely the fresh, bitter, or salt water holes in various parts of the great expanse. The Arabs have a peculiar way of cautioning desert travelers—"if one goes too far east, one goes to perdition."